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RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1689  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1766  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JEDDAH 000107

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA FEBRUARY 8, 15,  
22: GRAND MUFTI, RAIN PRAYERS, AND EASTERN PROVINCE

REF: A. JEDDAH 469 B. RIYADH 233

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Grand Mufti criticized on February 8 the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) report on women's rights in Islam and Saudi Arabia, arguing that it was "based on fallacies" and "unfair" (Reftel B). Throughout the Kingdom, Imams conducted rain prayers against the drought, which they alleged resulted from sin. In the Eastern Province, Sheikh al-Munajjid and a substitute khateeb spoke on the deterioration of "the social fabric," proper treatment of the deceased and their belongings, and the importance of good neighborly relations. (NOTE: The Open Source Center has discontinued processing Friday Sermons from the Grand Mosques in Mecca and Medina; Post has submitted a request that they resume. However, as a result and until further notice, Post will be unable to include them in the Mosque Sermons report. END NOTE.) END SUMMARY.

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GRAND MUFTI  
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UNHRC REPORT "BASED ON FALLACIES" AND "UNFAIR"

12. (U) Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah Al Al-Sheikh criticized on February 8 a UNHRC report on women's rights in Islam and Saudi Arabia. At the Riyadh Grand Mosque, the Grand Mufti stated that the UN report was "based on fallacies, errors and untrue information, which is spiteful for our religion and country." Al-Sheikh claimed that the report was "...unfair, particularly the call to end patronage of fathers over their daughters - and labeling it as disparaging to women and a repression of their freedom."

13. (U) Arguing that the system existed for the protection of women, Grand Mufti Al-Sheikh further stated that to end such a system would carry "...great injustice and enmity towards God and Prophet Muhammad...." The Imam said that those who "...demand that women be allowed to travel without a chaperon or to marry without the approval of her guardian are only seeking promiscuity and corruption...." He added: "There are those who want to destroy the (Islamic) marriage system...and for the Muslims (sic) to live like beasts, with men mixing with women."

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KINGDOM-WIDE  
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DROUGHT DUE TO SINFULNESS

¶4. (C) Imams conducted prayers on February 9 for rain and attributed a lack of rain to "sinfulness." Grand Mosque of Mecca Imam Sheikh al-Sudaiys stated that "Misfortune does not befall (a country) unless sins have been committed there." In Riyadh Grand Mufti Al-Sheikh performed rain prayers and also alluded to sin as the cause of the recent dry weather. (COMMENT: Imams often attribute irregular weather/natural disasters to punishment from God, as was the case when an Eastern Province Imam argued that the destruction from the November 2007 fires in California should be a lesson that "God's power is mighty." (Reftel A) END COMMENT.)

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EASTERN PROVINCE  
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THE COUNTRY'S SOCIAL FABRIC IS DETERIORATING

¶5. (C) At the Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Grand Mosque on February 8, Sheikh Mohammad Saleh al-Munajjid argued that respect for elders and loyalty had been replaced with insolence and greed, adding that the country's social fabric had deteriorated. He cited a general example in which women marry men but do not thank them for their sacrifices -- such as allowing women to complete their education -- and then divorce their husbands due to the new-found social status their education confers. To further prove his point, he recounted a story in the press in which a highly-paid American actress divorced her husband due to social

incompatibility.

PROPER TREATMENT OF THE DECEASED AND THEIR BELONGINGS

¶6. (C) Al-Munajjid on February 15 discussed the duties and responsibilities of the faithful toward the dead, including proper burial and funeral services. He deemed "un-Islamic" customs he considered "pagan," such as wailing, excessive crying, and beating one's chest. He then spoke on the importance of ensuring that nothing improper exists among the deceased's belongings. He characterized as "improper," video-audio materials and literature that include "ungentlemanly and violence-inciting speeches," as well as "pornographic materials."

GOOD NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO SURVIVAL

¶7. (C) A substitute khateeb in his February 23 sermon discussed the importance of having good relations with one's neighbors, stating that "good neighborly relations" were essential to human survival." To support this claim he cited examples from the Prophet Muhammad's life as well as quoted the Angel Jibrail (Gabriel). He argued that the importance of "good neighborly relations" was inevitable given how the world has become a global village and nations/communities are less isolated.

GFOELLER